



City of Detroit Office of the Ombudsman
DURENE L. BROWN, CITY OMBUDSMAN

Ombudsman's Newsletter

"Getting Problems Out of the Way So That Progress Can Occur"

July 2008

Volume 3 • Issue 1

City Ombudsman wants you to go Green!

For the second year in a row, the Office of the Ombudsman forwarded more complaints to the Environmental Affairs Department than any other city agency. The number one complaint from March 1, 2007, until February 29, 2008: Trash and illegal dumping.

Concerns about open, dangerous and vacant properties generated nearly 1,000 complaints which were referred to the Buildings & Safety Engineering Department. This represents an increase of almost five percent over last year's reporting period, while complaints sent to Environmental Affairs increased by one percent.

"Although these increases seem small, they are significant," City Ombudsman Durene L. Brown told City Council members in April. "The data indicates that the city is one percent dirtier than last year!"

"We have every right to a clean and safe neighborhood," she added. Brown went on to say that children who grow up in these neighborhoods are at risk, and senior citizens are frightened. She recommended increased funding for demolitions and an ordinance



Durene L. Brown
City of Detroit Ombudsman

amendment requiring the use of authorized building materials to secure vacant properties.

The City Ombudsman also lists suggestions for keeping neighborhoods clean:

- Use trash cans and don't throw litter in the streets.
- Know when your trash will be picked up & set out your Courville container on collection day only.
- Remove your Courville container from the curb after trash is collected.
- Generally, there are four (4) bulk collections a year and the schedule of pick ups is announced and posted on the city's Web site. Set out bulk items during scheduled collection events only.
- Call the Office of the Ombudsman at (313) 224-6000 to report illegal dumping.

For a copy of the **2008 Budget Analysis Report and Recommendations**, call (313) 224-6000, or visit the Ombudsman Web site accessed through the city's Web site at www.detroitmi.gov.

OMBUDSMAN TOP COMPLAINTS BY DEPARTMENT

2007	2008
1. Environmental Affairs	1. Environmental Affairs
2. DWSD	2. BS&E
3. Police	3. DWSD (tie)
4. BS&E (tie)	- General Services (tie)
- Public Works (tie)	4. Police

Reports are available

According to the City Charter, the Ombudsman reports periodically to the City Council and makes recommendations. For copies of the reports and recommendations, visit the Web site for the Office of the Ombudsman (accessed through the City's Web site), or call (313) 224-6000.

Help the City Ombudsman End Breast Cancer Forever

The welfare and well-being of Detroiters is the focus of the Office of the Ombudsman and that's why we're excited to broaden our assistance by joining two organizations that are committed to ending breast cancer forever!

I was asked to get involved with the Karmanos Cancer Institute and the Susan G. Komen for the Cure because breast cancer is still a big problem in the African-American community. There has been progress in the breast cancer awareness movement; however, for black women, we suffer a 36-percent higher death rate than white women. This means that black women have the highest death rate and poorest survival rate among other racial and ethnic groups with the disease.

This is a problem that we can do something about... Join the "Circle of Promise."

Susan G. Komen for the Cure has designed a campaign called the "Circle of Promise." This program aims to engage African American women in the fight to end breast cancer forever. Ford Motor Company, Essence Magazine, and the Links organization want us to take control of our health, educate ourselves and become ambassadors in our community by developing the following habits:

- **Schedule your own mammogram. For low-income, uninsured or underinsured women aged 40-64, the Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program (BCCCP), provides free women's health screening and treatment assistance.**
- **Encourage your mother, grandmother, sister, aunt and friends to schedule and show up for annual mammograms and do monthly self-exams. Offer to accompany them to appointments or help with scheduling, if needed.**
- **If you are under age 40, learn to do self-examinations, and schedule annual check-ups to monitor your overall health.**

These are personal commitments that will help us

reverse this alarming statistic and reduce the highest mortality rates in the country currently found in Wayne County.

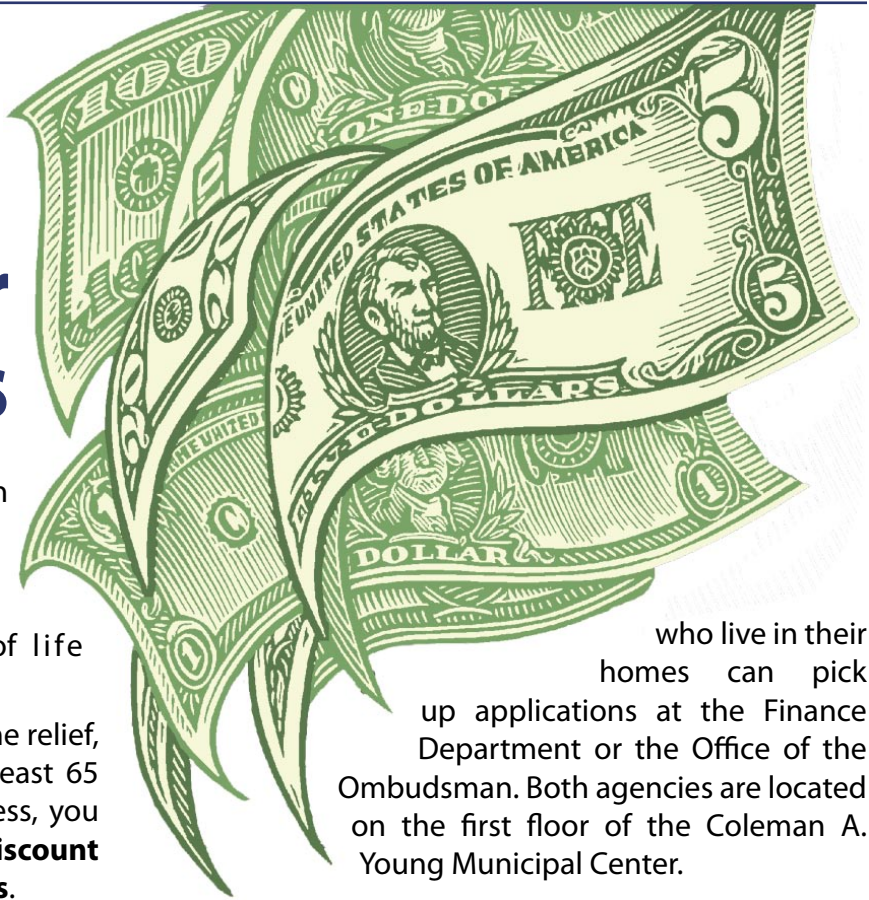
As your City Ombudsman, I pledge to assist with community education efforts by writing commentaries that will be printed in the *Michigan Citizen* and *Michigan Chronicle* periodically. Hopefully, these columns will complement existing efforts to generate interest among women and men and build support for those who are healthy, those who are sick, those who are dying and those left behind.

For more information, call the Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program at **888-242-2702**. You can also visit **www.circleofpromise.org**. In addition, remember that you can contact the Office of the Ombudsman at **313-224-6000**, or access our Web site through the Web site for the City of Detroit.

What is an Ombudsman?

The City Ombudsman is an appointed official who acts independently to receive and investigate complaints from residents, property owners, businesses, and visitors. In accordance with the City Charter, the Ombudsman also submits periodic reports to the City Council and makes recommendations to resolve ongoing complaints.

Financial Assistance Opportunities for Senior Citizens



It's no secret that the economic downturn has had a drastic impact on nearly every U.S. citizen. As a result working families, laid-off workers, and retirees in Detroit are faced with financial burdens that challenge the quality of life for many property owners.

There are two programs that may offer some relief, and applications are available. If you are at least 65 years old and your income is \$40,000.00 or less, you may be eligible for the **Senior Citizen Trash Discount** in Detroit and/or **Deferment of Summer Taxes**.

Applications are currently available for the Senior Citizen Trash Discount. You must complete the application and present picture identification, such as a driver's license, state identification or passport. Documents that can be used to verify income include IRS Form 1040 A or the Supplemental Social Security Benefits Form. The deadline is September 15, 2008, and forms can be picked up on the first floor of the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center.

Approval means that the \$300 assessment for trash collection will be reduced to \$150. Once approved, you don't have to apply again.

Applications for the **Deferment of Summer Taxes** program are also currently available. Eligibility requirements for this program are the same as those for the trash discount. If approved, the due date for payment of summer taxes would be deferred until February 15, 2009, without penalties and interest. Forms can be picked up on the first floor of the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center.

All forms must be returned to the Finance Department – Property Tax Division. Property owners

who live in their homes can pick up applications at the Finance Department or the Office of the Ombudsman. Both agencies are located on the first floor of the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center.

Even if you're not 65 years old, Hardship applications are available for property tax exemptions for both senior citizens and low income property owners. The forms can be picked up at the Assessor's Office on the eighth floor, Room 804. There is no deadline for Hardship applications. For more information, contact the Office of the Ombudsman.

Sign up for e-mail alerts

Periodically, the City Ombudsman will issue e-mail alerts and broadcasts to announce outreach programs, reinstitution of bulk pick-up schedules, reports, event information, meetings, etc. If you want to be added to the e-mail distribution list and receive e-mail alerts, go to the Ombudsman's Web site, select "Feedback" found at the top of the home page, and enter your e-mail address. The Ombudsman's Web site can be accessed through the City's Web site at www.detroitmi.gov.

The Office of the Ombudsman extends its gratitude

The Office of the Ombudsman has hosted three "Call Us First!" community forums since February 2006. Each time, the event has been scheduled in various locations throughout the city during the entire month.

In addition, the Office of the Ombudsman has participated in numerous community events, meeting with hundreds of community organizations and neighborhood groups.

Support from businesses has enhanced the impact of the Office of the Ombudsman at these outreach events and a BIG Thank You is extended to those businesses that provided goodies:

- Michigan Regional Council of Carpenters
- MGM Grand Detroit
- Uncle Ray's Potato Chips & Snacks
- Waste Management

For more information about "Call Us First!" or if you would like the City Ombudsman to attend your community meeting, contact Gail Barnard, Assistant Ombudsman IV and Outreach Coordinator at **(313) 224-1914**, or e-mail **barnardg@ombud.ci.detroit.mi.us**.

Why would you want to contact the Ombudsman?

If you have a complaint against any City department or agency, you should call the Office of the Ombudsman. Abandoned cars, illegal dumping, flooded streets, vacant/abandoned/dangerous buildings, public lighting outages, and tree trimming are some of the reasons to contact the Office of the Ombudsman.

There are several ways to reach the Office of the Ombudsman and file your complaint:

- **Telephone:** (313) 224-6000
- **Fax:** (313) 224-1911
- **Email:** ombudsman@ombud.ci.detroit.mi.us
- **U.S. Mail and Walk-ins:** Coleman A. Young Municipal Center, 2 Woodward Avenue, Suite 114, Detroit, MI 48226

Office of the Ombudsman Hours

8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.
Monday through Friday

Office of the Ombudsman

Coleman A. Young Municipal Center
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